

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Judith Longden
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The privately owned school is registered as a children's home to accommodate 22 children and young people. The school provides education and care to children and young people who present with severe learning disabilities, challenging behaviours, autistic spectrum disorder and associated epilepsy.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The home provides excellent personalised and well planned care that takes account of the individual and complex needs of each young person. The home has excellent procedures and protocols that ensure young people are kept safe and protected from harm. Staff implement a positive behaviour management strategy and have excellent relationships with young people. The young people make good progress in their education and health and develop good social skills and confidence through participation in a variety of activities. The home is managed by a competent and experienced manager and senior team. Staff are well trained and supported. There are two requirements made as a result of this inspection relating to the monitoring processes used.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
33 (2001)	ensure visits include consultation with children, parents, relatives and persons working at the home to form an opinion of the standard of care provided (Regulation 33(4)(a))	31/12/2011
34 (2001)	supply to the HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by the manager.(Regulation 34(2))	16/12/2011

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress in achieving positive outcomes in all areas. One parent said, 'my child is encouraged to reach their full potential.' Young people are set individual targets in areas such as developing social skills, accessing the community and developing skills relating to food and drink for example shopping or clearing the table. Their progress and achievement is evidenced using photographs and witness statements from staff. This record is shared with parents and social workers and is taken to reviews to evidence progress made. As a result young people have further developed their confidence and self esteem. One social worker said of a young person 'they have made brilliant progress.'

Young people benefit from a varied menu that provides a healthy balanced diet and takes into account medical dietary needs, religious and cultural beliefs and young people's preferences. Young people use symbols and pictures placed on plates to express their choices. Kitchen staff have completed communication skills training so they can understand choices made. This encourages interaction between staff and young people at meal times. Young people help to plan the menus, purchase food and prepare meals at levels that reflect their individual abilities. This provides an opportunity to develop independence skills. Outdoor activities and exercise are encouraged in order to promote healthy living. Young people also benefit from quiet time and opportunities for relaxation. Their health is further promoted by the implementation of daily personal care and hygiene routines.

Young people engage in a variety of activities and try different challenges. Risk assessments are completed for each individual that enable reasonable risks whilst still providing new experiences for young people. Young people benefit from a variety of activities on site such as team building games, art, cooking, music, soft play and the use of the 'forest school' where they learn about outdoor life, nature and the environment. Young people learn new skills through activities such as gardening and growing vegetables. Facilities and clubs in the local community are also utilised for example the climbing wall. As a result young people develop new skills, form new friendships and grow in confidence. A parent said their child was now 'accessing community facilities, developing social skills and building friendships'.

Young people are achieving good outcomes in their school education and attendance. One young person who had been excluded from their previous school for four months is now back in full time education at the school on site. Young people have individual education plans that are developed as a result of their needs identified in placement plans. Young people's progress is recorded and certificates awarded for achievement. As a result young people are achieving their educational potential.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their parents and family. The home communicates very effectively with parents and social workers. As a result

people who play an important role in young people's lives are actively involved in the care they receive.

Young people learn a variety of self care and independence skills in the home. They are able to develop these skills further when living in the lodge in the grounds of the school. This unit supports older young people by involving them in day to day activities such as cooking, cleaning, shopping and washing clothes. As a result young people develop skills of living together to prepare them for the accommodation they will move too. Very good transitional plans are developed by staff with young people in the home that complement the pathway plans. These assess young people's needs and as a result ensure the correct support is in place to enable their transition to adulthood.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **outstanding**.

Young people receive an outstanding quality of care from a motivated staff team who have high aspirations for all the young people. One parent described, 'it has been a turbulent journey to get to this point, nobody could cope with my child's complex needs, being here has changed their life it is the best thing that has ever happened.' Parents views are sought through annual surveys developed by the home, one survey from a parent stated, 'I regard it as the place my child lives and the staff are close family, it is not a children's home. The staff have respect for each individuals needs and continue to care and love.'

Young people are able to express their feelings, share their views and voice their opinions in all aspects of their care and in the running of the home. They contribute to their care plans, and reviews using symbols and photographs. One social worker said, 'the home is very good at ensuring the contribution of young people to their reviews.' Young people participate in making choices about routines and life in the home using various formats and communication methods.

Young people are supported if they wish to complain. Good information in a variety of formats is available to young people on how to complain or comment on the care they receive.

Staff work creatively and proactively to build relationships with young people and manage their behaviour. An example is one young person gets agitated with staff in the morning and finds it hard to follow a morning routine. Staff now place a photograph of who will wake them up and symbols of the routine to follow on their bedroom wall before bed time to reassure them for the morning. As a result their relationships and behaviour has improved.

Excellent health care plans ensure the individual health needs of young people are identified and actions are in place to meet these needs. Issues of health relating to culture, ethnicity, sexuality and faith are explicit in their plans. Young people have access to various medical professionals including those with specific skills for working

with children with learning disabilities. The home employs a speech and language therapist to support their work. The home has an effective medication policy and staff are trained in administration, recording and safe storage of medication. The manager regularly monitors the systems and practice to ensure medication is administered safely. Staff support young people to understand health issues such as sexuality, smoking and alcohol use and encourage young people to adopt a healthy diet and lifestyle. As a result the physical, emotional and psychological health of young people is promoted.

Staff encourage young people in a variety of activities and leisure pursuits within the home and extensive grounds as well as in the local community. The home has an activity co-ordinator who develops programmes for young people that help to promote learning, develop confidence and improve self esteem. One parent stated that the staff have been able to manage their child's behaviour to enable them to engage within the wider community and take part in new and challenging experiences.

The setting provides school facilities on site with excellent resources and facilities that afford a broad range of learning opportunities in school and the home. Communication between the school staff and care staff is excellent. This means there is continuity in the learning for young people. As a result young people are supported to achieve their educational potential.

Young people live in a home that provides a safe but stimulating environment. The home is well maintained and decorated and young people choose the decoration and furnishings for their bedrooms. The home offers excellent facilities that provide a variety of activities and areas where young people can relax. Extensive gardens, allotments, greenhouses, sensory garden and wooded area provide an environment where young people can experience a wide range of outdoor activities.

Young people benefit from excellent care plans that identify their needs and address all aspects of daily living. These clearly indicate how each young person is cared for, their daily routines, likes and dislikes, behaviours and how to minimise risks. Plans identify targets for young people to achieve in their daily living such as learning to clear the table, trying new foods or learning to clean their teeth. As a result young people are cared for in line with their individual care plan.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **outstanding** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

The home provides an environment of care and support where bullying is not tolerated. A high staff ratio to young people helps to reduce the likelihood of bullying. Staff understand group dynamics and recognise changes in behaviour and are able to address any behavioural concerns before they escalate into bullying. This ensures young people are protected from bullying.

Positive behaviour is encouraged by giving praise and frequent expressions of approval. This is supported by strong positive relationships between young people and staff. A social worker said, 'the staff work well with challenging behaviour and build good relationships. One young person used to be agitated with other people but now helps out as reception monitor.' Staff are trained in managing challenging behaviour specific to young people with complex needs, using verbal conflict resolution techniques and only using physical restraint as a last resort. One parent stated their child had experienced restraint five or six times a day in a previous placement but had not been restrained at all in the five months they had been at the home.

Young people benefit from individual behaviour management plans. These identify triggers to behaviour, consequences, the best way to deal with behaviour and individual handling strategies. Photographs of accepted holds and physical interventions are included in the plans. The use of sanctions is in accordance with the understanding of the young person. As a result young people interact positively with staff and each other and behave appropriately.

The home has excellent policies and procedures for safeguarding practices in respect of child protection, handling allegations, recruitment and young people's risk assessments. Staff are trained in safeguarding including training on recognising abuse in disabled children. Staff are clear on their role in the safeguarding process. Robust recruitment processes and the recording and monitoring of visitors to the home further ensure young people are protected from significant harm. Risk assessments are proportionate in order to help young people develop. Parents and social workers state that young people are safe and well protected in the home.

The home has a very good missing from care procedure and protocol. Excellent levels of supervision ensure young people are kept safe and do not go missing. There have been no incidents of young people going missing.

Young people live in a home that provides the appropriate level of security to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Regular fire, maintenance and equipment checks further promote the safety of young people.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **good**.

Young people benefit from a home that continues to demonstrate improvement in a number of areas in particular the gathering of views from parents and young people through surveys and developing various communication tools. There were no previous requirements or recommendations. Two requirements are made as a result of this inspection in relation to monitoring the quality of care.

Young people are made to feel welcome to the home. A thorough pre admission process enables young people and parents to meet staff and ensure their views and opinions are taken into account. Young people are provided with good information

about the home in formats appropriate to their communication needs. Each young person has their own children's guide which is updated regularly. The home has a good Statement of Purpose and staff and parents are clear on the aims and ethos of the service. As a result young people feel valued and involved in their placement.

The home is managed by suitable personnel who are qualified and experienced ensuring a service that is efficient and effective in caring for young people and developing them to reach their full potential. The manager understands the strengths and areas for development for the home and has a good development plan to improve the home even further. This means the young people benefit from an ever-improving service.

Staff have a variety of skills, qualifications and experience and bring different strengths to the service. The staff rota ensures young people's needs are met through the provision of sufficient staffing. Nominated staff teams remain in specified units for a minimum period of one year. This provides young people with continuity of care.

Staff receive an excellent induction and an extensive variety of training and development opportunities. Staff training files are very comprehensive and detail the courses taken, any required renewal dates and copies of certificates. Staff evaluate their learning and specify how they will put their training into practice in the home. They also reflect on how their practice has changed as a result of their learning. As a result they are able to improve their competency and ensure young people's needs are met.

Staff are supported by a competent manager and senior team and receive excellent support, guidance and supervision. This ensures the service provided to young people remains of the highest quality.

The home has procedures in place for monitoring the quality of the service provided and the welfare of the young people. The registered provider undertakes regular visits to the home in accordance with regulations. However the consultation with young people, parents, staff and social workers is infrequent during these visits. This means the person carrying out the visit is limited in their ability to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. The use of parent and young people surveys does however provide an annual review of the quality of care. The manager monitors records kept by the home to identify any concerns, patterns or trends. Monitoring reports are completed regularly but are not forwarded to Ofsted as required. Records are stored securely and information sharing is in accordance with data protection. All significant events relating to the protection of young people in the home are notified as appropriate and actions taken as required. As a result the welfare and protection of young people is monitored.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

